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NEWS RELEASE

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The Georgia Department of Public Health Expands Free Nicotine Treatment in 14 Counties

ATLANTA – The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is now offering free Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) support to the 14 counties in the Albany Public Health District. The program is administered through the Georgia Tobacco Quit Line, and offers uninsured adult callers (ages 18 and older) nicotine patches or gum at no cost.

“Research indicates that most smokers make several attempts before they can successfully quit and resist the nicotine addiction,” said Dr. Kimberly Redding, DPH’s Director of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Program. As noted in the 2010 Surgeon General’s report, *How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: What It Means to You*, quitting may take several tries before an individual succeeds.

Regardless of insurance status, the Georgia Tobacco Quit Line provides free and confidential, professional counseling tailored to tobacco users ages 13 and older including pregnant Georgia women. Georgia adults who use tobacco are also encouraged to speak to their physician, pharmacist, nurse and other health care provider about safe and effective treatment options to assist with quitting tobacco.

For every person who dies from tobacco use, another 20 suffer with at least one serious tobacco-related illness. Tobacco use impacts Georgia’s children, families, communities, and the economy. In Georgia, one out of every six deaths or more than 10,300 adults die each year due to tobacco-related diseases. In addition, approximately \$1.8 billion in health care costs among adults aged 18 years and older is attributed to tobacco use.

In an effort to improve the health status among Georgia families, free tobacco cessation medication support is being offered in regions where adult smoking prevalence and severe health effects are high.

Quitting tobacco use lowers the risk for lung cancer and other types of cancer. In addition, it reduces the risk for developing severe respiratory conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), one of the leading causes of death nationwide.

Among current adult smokers in the United States, approximately 70 percent report that they want to quit completely, and millions have attempted to quit smoking.

To find out which Public Health District your county is located in, please visit <http://health.state.ga.us/regional/index.asp>.

For more information about NRT medications, contact the Georgia Tobacco Quit Line at 1-877-270-STOP (7867).

About the Georgia Quit Line

The Georgia Tobacco Quit Line is a public health service funded by the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement (MSA). The Georgia Tobacco Quit Line is administered by the Georgia Department of Public Health through the Georgia Tobacco Use Prevention Program (GTUPP). Callers have the opportunity to speak with professionals who develop an individualized plan customized to address tobacco cessation, withdrawal symptoms and relapse prevention. Callers are also provided with a free “Quit Kit” and self-support materials. Referring health care providers may also elect to receive customized patient/client progress or feedback reports.

About the Georgia Department of Public Health

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is the lead agency responsible for the health of Georgia’s communities and the entire population. In 2011, the General Assembly restored DPH to its own state agency after more than 30 years consolidated under other departments. At the state level, DPH is divided into numerous divisions, sections, programs and offices, and at the local level, DPH functions via 18 health districts and 155 county health departments. Through the changes, the mission has remained constant – to protect the lives of all Georgians. Today, DPH’s main functions include: Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Maternal and Child Health, Infectious Disease and Immunization, Environmental Health, Epidemiology, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Emergency Medical Services, Pharmacy, Nursing, Volunteer Health Care, the Office of Health Equity, Vital Records and the State Public Health Laboratory. For more information on DPH, visit www.health.state.ga.us.

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